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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RIGA 000533

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [KCFE](#) [MARR](#) [RS](#) [LG](#)
SUBJECT: LATVIAN REACTION TO RUSSIAN CFE MOVES - PLANS,
PLEASE

REF: MOSCOW 3451

Classified By: Charge d'affaires a.i. Tamir G. Waser. Reason 1.4 (b and d)

11. (C) Summary: Putin's July 13 decree on CFE did not surprise Latvia, which expected a move like this after the escalating rhetoric of recent months. But Latvian officials are using it as a reminder that Latvia's border with Russia is a key reason Latvia wanted to join NATO. Public rhetoric has been calm, with most officials expressing regret over Moscow's decision. Quietly, though, Latvian officials say they will use this action to push again for the NATO contingency planning they have always expected would come with Alliance membership. Latvia also wants to ensure that, although not a party to the CFE treaty, they remain part of the NATO dialogue in formulating a response and agreeing on next steps. End summary.

12. (U) When news of Putin's decree first broke, senior officials in the MFA and PM's office were immediately in touch with Charge to seek any US reaction to use in formulating their responses. FM Pabriks was quoted initially as saying that the decision "creates a threat for the security of NATO member states, including Latvia." He later said he was misquoted and he meant only that the move would harm the confidence between NATO and Russia and have negative consequences in the long term for regional stability. The Foreign Ministry issued a statement "regretting" the Russian action and reaffirming Latvia's intention to join the adapted CFE treaty when it came in to force, but recalling Russia's Istanbul Commitments. President Zatlers said much the same in a radio interview. Maris Riekstins, Chief of Staff to PM Kalvitis, said on TV that the decision could "create a new reality" in the region, but added that no one should "overdramatize" the situation.

13. (U) Reporting in the Latvian language press has been largely factual with editorials suggesting that Russia is reasserting itself and noting the domestic political value of these actions. Coverage in Latvia's Russian language press has been mixed, with the more responsible press being largely factual, but the more yellow press suggesting that this the only choice Russia had after the Baltic States were brought in to NATO with no move by the Alliance to ratify the adapted treaty.

14. (C) Russian Ambassador Kahluzhny called on FM Pabriks on July 16 to explain the decision and ask for Latvia's help "in explaining Russia's actions" to others in NATO. According to the MFA director of Security Policy, Kaspars Ozolins, Pabriks reminded Kahluzhny of the Istanbul Commitment and said that Russia needed to take responsibility for explaining its actions to others. Ozolins said that he thought Russia might provide a fuller presentation in capitals of states party to the treaty and asked for the U.S. to provide any additional information we might receive.

15. (C/NF) At a diplomatic function July 16, MFA State Secretary Penke told Charge that Latvia would instruct its

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Embassies in Washington and London to "quietly discuss with select friends" in government Latvia's desire to get contingency planning from NATO as a result. PM Kalvitis' foreign policy advisor Peteris Ustubs confirmed this on July 18, saying that the topic would be discussed at a meeting of the Latvian National Security Council the week of July 23 (strictly protect, as NSC agendas are classified). Ustubs said that in addition to the tasking to explore the possibility of contingency planning, he also expected that Latvian intelligence services would be asked to step up collection and reporting on Russian military activity near Latvia's border.

16. (C/NF) Comment: The Latvians are generally restrained in their public reaction and none of the more nationalist political forces have tried to make much out of the Russian decision. The Latvians have long sought contingency planning at NATO, which they expected to come with their NATO membership card. They want to see paper that shows them that NATO has a plan to defend Latvia from attack (ideally an attack from Russia). Despite efforts at NATO to explain that this is not really an exercise that NATO does these days, the Latvians continue to push for this. The CFE move by Russia does not, in our opinion, make Latvia feel less secure or increase the urgency of this request, but we believe they see it as an opening to request something they have wanted all along, hoping we will change our minds in response to Moscow's move. The Latvians' other concern is that we continue to keep them fully informed of our thinking on this issue, even though they are not party to the CFE treaty. They greatly appreciated our briefing in advance of June's

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extraordinary conference and hope such dialogue will continue in Riga, Washington, Brussels and Vienna. This is especially true if we are willing to show any flexibility on the Istanbul Commitments or take other action that would attempt to bridge the gap with Russia. The Latvians will likely support most ideas we would float as long as they know about it in advance.

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